



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Required Report - public distribution

**Date:** 5/10/2004

**GAIN Report Number:** GM4019

## Germany

## Biotechnology

## Agricultural Biotechnology - Recent Events

### 2004

**Approved by:**

Richard Petges  
U.S. Embassy Berlin

**Prepared by:**

Dietmar Achilles

---

**Report Highlights:**

Implementation of EU Traceability and Labeling regulations were covered extensively by German media. German Agricultural Ministry and biotech opponents call for labeling of products from animals fed with GMOs. Early in May, the first German test field for biotech wheat had been destroyed.

---

Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Berlin [GM1]  
[GM]

## Agricultural Biotechnology – Recent Events in Germany

During the week of April 18, when the EU T&L regulations became effective, German print and electronic media extensively covered the issue of green biotechnology. Press statements about labeling were released by the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection Food and Agriculture (BMVEL) and Greenpeace. Biotech opponents organized a number of demonstrations on Saturday, April 17. Demonstrators demanded that all products, which had contact with biotechnology in some way, including livestock products, should be labeled as GMO products. Most of the media clippings also regretted that not all GMO products are labeled as such.

BMVEL Minister Kuenast commented on the T&L implementation by saying, " Finally, the consumers have the freedom of choice." However, Kuenast added in her press release that in the area of green biotechnology there are still many open questions. In press interviews, she admitted that according to current knowledge there is no evidence of concrete risks resulting from biotechnology, but she added that there are still many questions, and not only health related questions. She referred to a recent British study, which concluded that biodiversity was reduced in GMO fields. In some press statements Kuenast assured her constituents that she would pressure Brussels to expand the current GMO labeling requirements. Among others, she is pushing for the labeling of products from animals fed with feed containing GMOs.

Since Germany has not yet developed a national position on green biotechnology, Germany has not been in the position to vote for or against Bt11 and NK603. Germany had to abstain in these decisions. There is no indication that this German stalemate will be overcome in the foreseeable future.

We reported (GAIN GM4016) that the Swiss company Syngenta had planted fusarium tolerant biotech wheat into a test field in the beginning of April. After overcoming a previous destructive attack, this test field was finally destroyed by a second attack on Sunday night, May 2nd. It is interesting to note that there have been no condemning statements by BMVEL or other federal authorities indicating that such field test destruction is a criminal act. However, the State of Sachsen-Anhalt filed lawsuits with the view of pursuing legal action once the perpetrators are identified.

During recent months, Monsanto successfully convinced a number of farmers in southern and eastern Germany to plant Bt-corn containing the GMO event MON810. These are 29 different plots totaling about 300 hectares, two in Baden-Wuerttemberg, nine in Bavaria, one in Thuringia, five in Saxony, six in Sachsen-Anhalt, four in Brandenburg and two in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Seeds are supplied by three different seed companies: Monsanto, Pioneer and KWS. The plantings are all commercial (see also GAIN GM4014) and will be monitored by private industry to gather data about potential crosspollination. The Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg will scientifically analyse the production and monitoring program. The Bt-corn fields range from one to twenty hectares in size. They are embedded in conventional cornfields, with at least 60 meters of conventional corn around the 'test' field. Monsanto reports that a portion of the monitoring cost will be covered by the Federal Ministry of Research and Education, which is headed by the Social Democrat Party.

Earlier this year, the agricultural committee of the Bavarian parliament advised Bavarian farmers not to participate in GMO crop production programs. This advice was overturned by a new vote at the end of April 2004. Now, the Bavarian parliament supports the careful application of biotechnology in crop production. However, the Bavarian Farmers Association warns their members that the legislation dealing with liability resulting from GMO crop

production has not yet been finalized. The current proposed revisions of the German genetech law places an unfair burden on the farmers producing GMO crops. The proposed rule says that the GMO farmer would be liable for damage, even if he exactly followed the requirements of good farming practices, which still need to be developed.

Reportedly, the Bavarian Farmers Association is advising their members to form GMO free farming regions. According to a recent press article, already about 8,000 farmers Germany-wide have voluntarily agreed not to grow GMO crops. Many of these farmers are dairy farmers managing grassland, where there are currently very limited to non-existent biotech possibilities. The duration and validity of these agreements is not clear. European law does not permit a member state to declare the whole country or a specified region as GMO-free. However, private farmers may voluntarily declare that they are not using GMO-crops in their fields or GMO feeds in their livestock production.

Many food processing companies are urging farmers in Germany to sign a statement that they are not using GMOs on their farms. At a recent meeting of the German farm cooperative, legal advisers advised farmers not to sign any such commitments since there are practically no feeds on the market that do not have any biotech content.